DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 133 CS 010 132

AUTHOR Fitzgerald, Jill; And Others
TITLE The Relationship between Parental Literacy Level and Perceptions of Emergent Literacy.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 43p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (39th, Austin, TX, November 28-December 2, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Family Environment; Interviews; Kindergarten; Likert Scales; *Literacy; Multivariate Analysis; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Influence; *Parent Role; Preschool Children; Reading Research; Reading Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Emergent Literacy; *Literacy Events; Parent Expectations

ABSTRACT

A study examined parental perceptions of young children's literacy development and explored the relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events/experiences in preschoolers' literacy development. Subjects, 108 parents of beginning kindergartners, were interviewed and given a test of literacy level. Statistical as well as interpretive analyses were used. Results indicated that parents were very positive about the notion that literacy learning can begin during the preschool years. There was, however, a significant negative relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events; parents with lower literacy levels thought literacy artifacts and events were even more important than did parents with higher literacy levels. Low-literacy and high-literacy parents tended to have different perceptions of what is important for early literacy development. (Five Tables of data and one figure are included.) (Author/MG)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED320133

# The Relationship between Parental Literacy Level and Perceptions of Emergent Literacy

Jill Fitzgerald

Dixie Lee Spiegel

James W. Cunningham

The University of North Carolina

at Chapel Hill

Running head: PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS010132

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

JILL FITZGERALD

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Abstract

The study examined parental perceptions of young children's literacy development and explored the relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events/experiences in preschoolers' literacy development. One-hundred-eight parents of beginning kindergartners were interviewed and given a test of literacy level.

The interview had two open-ended items asking about why some children are successful in reading and writing in school and others aren't and about what parents of preschoolers might do to to help them learn to read and write better later in school. Likert items gauged views of the importance of literacy artifacts and events and interactions in the home during preschool years for later success in reading and writing.

Statistical as well as interpretive analyses were used. On the whole, parents were very positive about the notion that literacy learning can begin during the preschool years. There was, however, a significant negative relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events; parents with lower literacy levels thought literacy artifacts and events were even *more* important than did parents with higher literacy levels. Further, low-literacy and high-literacy parents tended to have different perceptions of what is important for early literacy development.

## The Relationship between Parental Literacy Level and Perceptions of Emergent Literacy

The purpose of this study was to examine parental perceptions of young children's literacy development and to explore the relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events/experiences in preschoolers' literacy development. In this study, literacy refers to reading and writing.

Recent research on emergent literacy clearly indicates that literacy acquisition may begin during the preschool years, when children may acquire concepts of literacy, learn about the functions and conventions of print, and develop an interest in reading and writing (Briggs & Elkind, 1977; Burns & Collins, 1987; Durkin, 1978; Goodman, 1986; Hall, 1987; Heath, 1983; Kastler, Roser, & Hoffman, 1987; Manning & Manning, 1984; Mason & Blanton, 1971; Moon & Wells, 1979; Morrow, 1983; Teale, 1986, 1987).

Importantly, particular features of the home environment have been found to be positively related to the early emergence of literacy (Kastler, Roser, & Hoffman, 1987; Manning & Manning, 1984; Morrow, 1983). Specifically, children may be socialized into the world of literacy via the presence of literacy artifacts (such as newspapers, children's books, paper, and pencils), experiences (such as checking the schedule in the "TV Guide"), events (such as seeing adults reading and writing in a variety of situations), and interactions (such as bedtime story reading).

But under what conditions does such a literacy-rich environment occur? Several factors might hypothetically be related to the extent to which literacy-nurturing home environments are created. Yet only two such factors, socioeconomic status and cultural/ethnic background, have been investigated previously to any extent, and even in those cases, research is sparse. One

theme that has begun to emerge, however, is that variations in home literacy patterns may not be clearly attributable to either socioeconomic status (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Schieffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews, & Waterman, 1983; Wells, 1986) or to cultural/ethnic background (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Schieffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Teale, 1986). That is, there is as much (or more) variation in home literacy patterns within selected socioeconomic levels and/or cultural/ethnic groups as among them.

Parental predisposition to cultivate a nurturing environment must be one of the pivotal factors in the creation of such a home setting. Yet virtually nothing is know about parental perceptions of literacy development in the early childhood years.

Further, one key factor in parental predisposition to establish literacy-rich home environments may be parental literacy level. Parents with lower literacy levels may attribute less importance to children's literacy development; to feel a sense of helplessness in fostering that development; and/or to be less able to foster that development. Parents with higher literacy levels, on the other hand, may have experienced the satisfactions often associated with literacy, such as attainment of higher job levels and the use of reading and writing as an escape or release from everyday stress. As a result, they may place high value on their children's success with reading and writing. Because they are literate themselves, they may also feel capable of providing literacy experiences for their children. But again, no studies have informed us about the views of parents with low literacy levels.

It would appear to be important now to document parental perceptions on emergent literacy and to explore the relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of emergent literacy. An understanding of parental

views, especially in relation to parental literacy level, should help us to better fashion literacy interventions for adults and youngsters, both inside and outside of school settings.

## Method

### Respondents and How They Were Chosen

The entire sample. We were interested in parental perceptions, defining "parent" broadly as the child's "primary caretaker." The parent or "caretaker" we were interested in interviewing was the person mainly responsible for the child in the domicile where the child spends most nights.

One-hundred-eight parents were interviewed. Nearly all of the respondents were interviewed when they brought their children to area schools in September for state-required public school testing prior to the children's entry into kindergarten. Prior to the scheduled testing, parents received letters in the mail explaining that we were interested in interviewing them when they brought the children for testing. At the schools, while the children were tested, each adult accompanying the children was approached by an interviewer. After a preliminary introduction, the interviewer said, "We are interested in your opinions about various things in preschoolers' lives, but we only want to interview you if you are the person who is mainly responsible for the child you brought here today. Are you the person who is mainly responsible for this child? Do you and the child live together?" If the answer to either question was "no," the interview was not conducted. If the answers were "yes," a consent form was read to the parent to explain conditions of the study and to secure permission to participate.

At one school, 98 children were scheduled for and attended testing; 54 caretakers were approached for interviewing and agreed to be interviewed. At the other school, 68 children (not counting the second child in pairs of

twins) were scheduled; 64 attended; 52 caretakers were approached; and 47 agreed to be interviewed.

In order to secure additional caretakers with low levels of literacy, following preschool testing, a local school administrator in charge of a project involving "at risk" kindergarten children was contacted. She identified nine caretakers (responsible for entering kindergarten students) who had not graduated from high school whose children were not screened at one of our two schools. We were able to contact seven of the nine, all of whom agreed to participate. The initial determination of caretaker status and securing of consent were done, and the interviews were then conducted in the caretakers' homes.

Eighty-four caretakers were mothers; 15 were fathers; and data were missing for nine cases. The average caretaker reading grade level equivalent on the Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) was 13.56 (SD = 4.16), with a range of 1.50 to 19.0. Forty-nine of the children of the 108 caretakers were females, and 57 were males (in two cases, gender was not identified). Thirty of the children were black; 70 were white; five were oriental or Asian; and in three cases, the data were missing. Caretaker race closely paralleled child race: 28 were black; 71 were white; five were Asian; and in four cases, data were missing. In 49 cases there was at least one older sibling living in the home.

Characteristics of low versus high literacy caretakers. For selected analyses, parents with low-literacy levels were compared to those with high-literacy levels. Low-literacy caretakers were those in the bottom quintile of the sample (grade equivalents of 7.9 or lower) and high-literacy caretakers were those in the top quintile of the sample (grade equivalents of 18.0 or higher). In the bottom quintile, there were 11 blacks, one white, one Asian,

and one whose ethnic origin was not identified. In the top quintile, there were one black, and 12 whites. In this sample, race of the caretaker and literacy level were highly correlated (point biserial $r_{xy}$ = .63, N= 98, $p$ = .00), with whites tending to be more literate.

Procedures

In private settings, trained interviewers (the investigators and six graduate assistants) individually read directions and then administered the questionnaire orally. Immediately following the interview, the Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) was given. Responses to the open-ended items were tape-recorded and later transcribed. After transcription, a reader listened to the tapes and read the transcriptions to verify their accuracy.

Interview

The interview had three subsets of items--two open-ended items, 38 Likert items, and several demographic items. Both open-ended and Likert items were used to provide multiple perspectives on parental perceptions. The open-ended items provided insight into perceptions not prompted by specific notions of artifacts or literacy events, and they permitted a wide variety of opinions to emerge. The Likert items provided insight into perceptions not confounded with or masked by parents' ability or willingness to verbalize their perceptions.

The two open-ended questions were designed to elicit parental opinions about early literacy development: Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others don't? and Do you think there is anything parents of two- to four-year olds might do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school? (If yes, what?) (For

each of these two questions, when caretakers finished, the interviewer prompted with "Anything else?" until the caretaker indicated "no.")

Second, two subsets of Likert items were developed. The following directions were given for the first subset of 12 Likert items which explored perceptions of the importance of having selected literacy *artifacts* available in the home (see Table 1 for the items):

> I'm going to read a list of some things children might have at home in the years before they go to school. Please tell me how important you think it is for children to have each one at home before they go to school in order for them to do well in reading and writing when they go to school. (Then, as the interviewer continued talking, caretakers were shown a paper listing the following responses.) You may think some of these things have nothing to do with reading and writing, i.e., you may think some are not important, or you may think some are slightly important, important, or very important. Also, I'd just like to emphasize that I'm interested in your opinion about these things for children in general.

---

Insert Table 1 about here.

The second subset of Likert items was about literacy *events and interactions*; it was subdivided into *child-focused events* and *adult-focused events*. The following directions preceded 18 items designed to tap perceptions of the importance of selected *child-focused events/interactions* in the home (see Table 1 for the items):

> Now I'm going to read a list of some things children might do at home in the years before they go to school. Please tell me how important you think it is for children to do each one before they go to school in

order for them to do well in reading and writing when they go to school. Remember, I'm interested in your opinion about these things for children in general, and I'm interested in how you think they affect reading and writing.

These directions preceded the final eight Likert items on the importance of selected *adult-focused events/interactions* in the home (see Table 1 for the items):

Here are some things children might see adults doing in their homes. Please tell me how important you think it is for children to see adults doing each one before the children go to school in order for them todo well in reading and writing when they go to school. Remember, I'm interested in your opinion about these things for children in general.

Third, demographic items elicited information on: child's age, gender, and race; number of older siblings; and informant's gender, race, and relation to the child.

Finally, to help address reliability, eight distractor items (i.e., regarding artifacts or events not normally considered to be inherently literacy-related) were interspersed throughout the likert items. (See Table 1).

Scoring and Reliability

Likert items. Each Likert item was scored 1 (not important), 2 (slightly important), 3 (important), or 4 (very important). Two scales were created from subsets of items by averaging across items: (a) extent to which Literacy Artifacts are important, and (b) extent to which Literacy Events/Interactions are important. For selected follow-up analyses, Literacy Events/Interactions were further subdivided into two subscales, Child-centered Events and Adult-centered Events.

Cronbach's coefficient alphas for reliability for the two major scales were .70 and .85, respectively. For the two subscales (Child- and Adult-centered Events) (used in some follow-up analyses), reliabilities were .82 and .80, respectively. In addition, a comparison of the overall average of all of the Likert items and of the distractor items supported reliability of the interview in that the individuals, on the average, thought the distractors were less important for emergent literacy than the other items, dependent $t(107) = 25.62$, $p = .00$ (means [SDs] were 1.78 [.54] and 3.16 [.33], respectively). Also, the correlation of the two major scales was .57 ($p = .00$), further supporting the validity of the scales, in that they appeared to tap a similar construct, yet were distinct enough to suggest that they were, in fact, measuring something slightly different.

Open-ended items. Only high- and low-literacy caretakers' open-ended responses were analyzed. To categorize caretakers' talk, transcripts were read, and as reasons for children's success (Question 1) or statements about parental roles in their children's literacy development (Question 2) were made, each reason or statement was classified as one of 88 categories. Responses for Questions 1 and 2 were categorized separately. Thirty-eight of the 88 categories came directly from the artifacts and events contained in the 38 Likert items in the interview. (See Table 1). The remaining 50 were created by having two of the investigators read 15% (randomly chosen) of the protocols in order to gain an idea of what other possible categories might be needed. Examples of the remaining 50 categories are shown as the lowest level entries in Figure 1.

When a caretaker mentioned the same reason or gave the same statement about parental roles more than once for a question or elaborated at length, the reason or statement was categorized only once for that question. Further,

if a reason or statement was mentioned in a negative manner, a negative was assigned to the category entry. Interrater agreement for coding responses into the 88 categories was .97.

---

Insert Figure 1 about here.

To explore the data, the 88 (Level 3) categories were grouped according to common characteristics to form 11 middle-level superordinate (Level 2) categories, and then further regrouped to form five high-level (Level 1) categories. The groups were created intuitively by two of the investigators working together. The three levels of categorization and their labels are shown in Figure 1.

Wide Range Achievement Test. The Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) is a quick (three to 10 minutes to administer), but highly reliable indicator of approximate reading level, expressed in grade equivalents. Individuals are asked to read words (arrayed in rows) in order of graduated difficulty. Grade equivalent scores were used in analyses. (It would be preferable to use raw scores, but they could not be used because the test contains two "levels" [one with "easier" words and one with "harder" words, each in order of graduated difficulty] which are used according to the relevant ability of the reader; raw scores from the level administered to the subject are then converted into grade equivalents; but the raw scores from one level to the other are not equivalent.) Test authors claim the test correlates highly (.74 to .85) with several standardized silent reading achievement tests, and provide a split-half reliability estimate of .98.

## Results

### Analyses

To assess potential differences in responses by site, a multivariate analysis of variance was done, with the two Likert scales (Artifacts and Events) as dependent variables, and site (school one, school two, and home) as the independent variable.

To assess whether there was a relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events in preschoolers' literacy development, several kinds of analyses were done:

(a) Likert items: A multivariate regression was done with the two scales (Artifacts and Events) as dependent variables and grade equivalent score on the Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) as the independent variable.

(b) Likert items: To compare high- versus low-literacy caretakers' views of the *relative* importance of each item, we rank ordered the means of parents' responses within each the three scales (Artifacts, Child-focused Events, and Adult-focused Events) for low-literacy caretakers and for high-literacy caretakers.

(c) Likert items: To discover the topics which *most differentiated* low- and high-literacy parents within each of the three subscales (Artifacts, Child-centered Events, and Adult-centered Events), we calculated the difference between low- and high-literacy caretakers' means for each item. We then examined the items for which there was more than one point difference.

(d) Open-ended items: To explore which factors of responses were similar and different between low- and high-literacy caretakers, percentages of all reasons (Question 1) or statements (Question 2)

mentioned were calculated for each of the three category levels, for Questions 1 and 2 separately and then combined, for low- and high-literacy caretakers separately. These percentages were then arrayed in a tables. (For example, see Table 2.)

---

Insert Table 2 about here.

Next, the tables of percentages were examined to identify important issues. A list was drawn up of salient issues and categories which strikingly differentiated low- versus high-literacy parents' perpectives.

Finally, one of the investigators used the table of percentages and the list derived from it to write summary statements about salient issues, patterns, and themes. A second investigator independently read the transcripts and wrote summary impressions of patterns and themes. The two investigators then met, compared, and discussed their final summaries, and jointly drew up a list of similarities and differences between low- and high-literacy caretakers' views.

So there were two major types of supporting data for findings from open-ended responses: (a) percentages of all responses that fell into a particular category, such as those shown in Table 2; and (b) respondents' own words. On occasion, one or two other types of information will be given, such as the percent of low- or high-caretakers who made a particular response.

Preliminary Findings: On the Whole,

How Did Caretakers Respond?

There was no significant effect of site on Likert scales (multivariate F [2,98] = .58, p=.67). Consequently, for remaining analyses, data were collapsed across site.

Description of responses to Likert items. Here is an introductory general description of people's responses to the Likert items, without taking into account literacy level. The means (and standard deviations) for the two scales (Artifacts and Events) were 2.90 (.42) and 3.29 (.35), suggesting that, on the whole, caretakers perceived literacy artifacts and events in the home during preschool years to be "important," with events slightly more important than artifacts. The range of responses for Artifacts was from 2.00 ("slightly important") to 3.75 (close to "very important"); for Events, it was 2.44 (close to "slightly important") to 3.92 (very close to "very important"). When events were separated into child-focused versus adult-focused events, the means (and standard deviations) were 3.36 (.39) and 3.14 (.46), respectively, suggesting that although both child-centered and adult-centered activities were perceived as "important," child-centered activities were seen as slightly more important.

Item means and standard deviations are shown in Table 1. Within artifacts, on the average, most items were perceived to be at least "slightly important." The items seen as most important were children's books/magazines, pens/pencils/markers, and paper. Least important artifacts were comic books and flashcards.

Within child-focused events and interactions, on the average, all items were perceived as at least "important." Especially important were listening to stories and children talking about stories read to them. Though still seen

as important, playing school, reciting the alphabet and watching educational TV were considered the least important child-centered literacy events.

Within adult-focused literacy events and interactions, on the average, all but two items were seen as at least "slightly important." Seeing adults reading books and newspapers, following written directions, and having their own library cards were perceived to be the most important activities. Seeing adults using a television guide and using written recipes were considered the least important.

All in all, scanning the scale and item means leads to a summary impression of caretakers' perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events for emergent literacy, without taking into account literacy level of the respondents: (a) Literacy artifacts and events during the preschool years were viewed as important. (b) What is done with the available literacy artifacts was seen as more important than simply having the artifacts themselves. (c) Simple literacy materials, such as books, pencils, and paper, were seen as the most important kinds of materials to have in the home for nurturing literacy. (d) Natural interactions with books was viewed to be the most important kind of literacy event. "Skills"-oriented activities (such as reciting the alphabet and playing school) and solitary activities (such as watching educational TV) were the least important. (e) Though both were perceived as important, children's participation in the events was more important than seeing adults doing the literacy activity.

<u>How were low- and high-literacy caretakers' perceptions similar as gleaned from responses to open-ended items?</u> The responses of low- and high-literacy caretakers to the open-ended questions were similar in four main ways: (a) Very little of their talk focused on literacy artifacts. Table 2 shows that for low- and high-literacy caretakers, 5 % and 10% (figured across

both Questions), respectively, of all of their responses had to do with artifacts. (b) Parents tended to see events that involved the child (Child-focused Events) and the child's own aptitude or disposition towards literacy learning (Child Characteristics) as the most central features of early literacy development. Columns five and six of Table 2 show that (across the two Questions) 81% percent of the low-literacy caretakers' responses and 67% of the high-literacy caretakers' fell into these two (of the Level 1) categories. For both groups, the most mentioned response was the child-focused event, "child listens to someone read to him or her" (one of the Level 3 categories). (Seventy-seven percent of the high-literacy caretakers and 62% of the low gave this response to at least one of the two questions.) (c) Both subgroups focussed on reading much more than writing as part of literacy. For the low-literacy caretakers, reading events and artifacts were nearly four times more likely to be mentioned than writing events or artifacts (across both questions, 21% and 5%, respectively). For high literacy parents, reading artifacts and events were twice as likely (27% and 13%, respectively). (d) The role of schools or teachers in children's literacy success was rarely mentioned in response to Question 1 (Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others don't?). Of all (77) responses, only four were "unspecified teacher attribution" and "teacher personality" (two of the Level 3 factors).

Relationship Between Parental Literacy Level
and Perceptions of the Importance of Literacy
Artifacts and Events: Likert Item Responses

There was a significant relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events (multivariate $F[2, 102] = 13.52$, $p = .00$). Follow-up univariate tests suggested the

relationship was especially strong between literacy level and perception of the importance of literacy artifacts (univariate F's[1, 103] for Artifacts and Events were 23.50 [p = .00] and 1.56 [p = .24], respectively.

Interestingly, the direction of the relationship was negative, i.e., caretakers with lower literacy levels, tended to perceive literacy artifacts and events in preschoolers' homes to be more important, while caretakers with higher literacy levels, tended to perceive them to be less important. The correlations of Artifacts and Events with caretaker's literacy level were -.43 (p = .00, N = 105) and -.12 (p = .11, N= 105), respectively.

Table 3 shows the means of responses on the scales of caretakers with low- versus high-literacy levels. Both sets of caretakers perceived artifacts and events to be at least "slightly important," but for each scale, except for adult events, the high literacy group, on the average, perceived the items to be slightly less important than did the low literacy group.

---

Insert Table 3 about here.

An interesting point here is that, for the low-literacy group, the relative difference in importance of child-centered events versus adult-centered events is exaggerated, whereas for the high-literacy group, child-centered and adult-centered activities were seen as roughly equivalent in importance.

Table 4 shows the top three and the bottom three entries of the rank orderings of responses on the three scales for low- versus high-literacy caretakers. For artifacts, both groups thought simple materials such as paper, pens, and magazines were most important (their responses ranked "high"), but it is interesting to note that among the top-ranked items for

low-literacy caretakers there were also materials that might be considered "instructional" (alphabet blocks and flashcards).

---

Insert Table 4 about here.

For child-centered events, one notable difference between high- and low-literacy caretakers was that low-literacy caretakers' rankings again revealed an emphasis on situations that might traditionally be considered "instructionally-oriented" (watching educational television and playing school), while high-literacy caretakers' rankings show these to be least important.

For adult-centered events, the two groups' rankings were extremely similar.

Table 5 shows the items for which there was more than one point difference between the means on the three subscales for low- versus high-literacy caretakers. In each case, the low-literacy caretakers rated the item higher in importance than did the high-literacy caretakers. On the whole, compared to the high-literacy caretakers, the low literacy caretakers tended to give more importance to "special use" items, i.e., items that might "teach" something, or that might be explicitly associated with "skill development."

---

Insert Table 5 about here.

Relationship Between Parental
Literacy Level and Perceptions
of the Importance of Literacy
Artifacts and Events:
Open-ended Item Responses

Patterns of responses were highly similar across both of the open-ended items. The following "themes" emerged with regard to ways in which the low- versus high-literacy groups differed in their perceptions.

Low- and high-literacy parents differed both in quantity and variety of reasons for children's success or failure in school as well for what they felt parents can do to help preschoolers. Low-literacy caretakers generally had much less to say than high-literacy caretakers, both about why some children do well in school and what parents might do to help their preschoolers to succeed later in reading and writing. Low-literacy caretakers averaged 1.92 responses for Question 1 and 2.46 for Question 2. High-literacy caretakers, on the average, gave over twice as many responses as low-literacy caretakers to Question 1 (mean = 4.73) and to Question 2 (mean = 5.27).

The variety of low-literacy caretakers' kinds of ideas about how to help preschoolers and about why children don't do well in school was likewise restricted. Table 2 shows many categories were never even used to classify low-literacy parents' responses. As a group, low-literacy caretakers did not give as broad a range of ideas as did high-literacy caretakers. For example, the low-literacy caretakers' responses coded as Child-focused Events (Level 1) (across both questions, about 19%) were drawn from just eight subordinate (Level 3) categories. By contrast, the high-literacy caretakers' responses for Child-focused Events comprised about the same percentage (16%) as the low-literacy caretakers', but their responses spanned twice as many (16) of the subordinate (Level 3) categories.

Following are entire responses of two caretakers to Question 2 which illustrate what we considered to be fairly typical contrasts in length and variety of responses between low- and high-literacy caretakers. Notice how the low-literacy caretaker's response is succinct, with a brief list-like

format, versus the high-literacy caretaker's response which is more drawn out and includes one or two more ideas.

(Low-literacy caretaker's response)

> Well, I think the parents should teach the children at home. Once in a while get a book and show them how to read, show them how to write.

(High-literacy caretaker's response)

> I think it's all indirect. I mean, what has seemed important for me to do is provide materials, let them have access all the time to paper and to drawing materials, because I think drawing is as much a part of writing. To me they're interchangeable, and I see that in my daughter. She makes letters on her drawings, and she adds drawings to her attempts at words, and they're real interchangeable at this point, and they're all a part of two-dimensional expression on a surface. And so providing materials for her to do that whenever she wants to paint or draw seems much more important to me than trying to drill her in letters or something, because she's exploring all that stuff herself, and you can just see that she's real ready to do this, and this is just part of it, just seems part of human development to be able to write. Some of her preschool stuff-- they sent home these mimeographed forms, and you can see that they feel this pressure to just start them on some sort of attempt towards letter recognition and drilling and stuff like that, and that stuff really turns me off for preschool. I really don't believe in that for preschool.

Teaching literacy skills versus nurturing literacy in a natural way. Low-literacy caretakers tended to combine a naturalistic view with one that embraced teaching of literacy skills; high-literacy caretakers tended to

espouse a more naturalistic, nurturing view of literacy development, and to actively reject a more skill-oriented view.

This theme was seen from several perspectives on the data. First, looking at the section on literacy artifacts in Table 2, although literacy artifacts were not mentioned a great deal by either group, there were differences between the groups; all of the mentions of skill-related artifacts by the low-literacy caretakers were positve, whereas by the high-literacy caretakers all were negative. That is, high-literacy caretakers said that they did not endorse the use of skill-related artifacts such as flashcards.

Second, looking at the section on child-focused events in Table 2, a similar pattern emerged; although neither group mentioned skill-related child events to any great degree, all of the mentions of skill-related child events by the low-literacy caretakers were positive, whereas by the high-literacy caretakers, 75% were negative.

Third, the caretakers' words themselves revealed differences in opinions between the two groups. In general, low-literacy caretakers gave examples of both naturalistic and skill-related events:

(Responses to Question 1)

> Because they pay attention, I guess, and because they have their parents help them at home. They were taught when they were in their earlier age, like from one, before they went to school.

> I have given a lot of thought about this, and I think it has a lot to do with at-home atmosphere, that you spend time with the child, quiet time, such as reading, coloring, just a lot of quiet things, not a lot of business, a lot of noise, that kind of thing. Taking time

with them to make sure they do know their ABC's, they can write their ABC's.

(Responses to Question 2)

They say words and names and things to make kids say it back to them. They read to them too.

Learn names, practice with letters and writing, maybe read with them.

On the other hand, a "natural" view of how to nurture literacy and a rejection of "skills" teaching is seen, for example, in these high-literacy caretakers' comments:

(Responses to Question 1)

I just don't believe in pushing any of this stuff. I think it can do more harm than good.

We read a lot to him and I think that that's what I favor emphasizing rather than flashcards and stuff. I don't believe in even drilling them about reading, but I'm interested in family sharing, reading out loud.

(Responses to Question 2)

[Child's name] is not reading or writing yet and probably doesn't know his alphabet from beginning to end either, and this is not because he has not been exposed to it . . . I feel like I've done everything I can for my own child and . . . there is a tendency to love books and to become a reader and a writer in a strong way.

> [This tendency] is not as strong as I'd hope to see, but I can accept that because that's the way this child is.

> I'm not a flashcard person particularly. I don't believe in pushing them. I believe in giving them opportunities mostly by reading to them, instilling in them a love of book by example.

> Matter of fact, I don't even know if she can even write the whole alphabet . . . She can write her name fairly well, but I'm not worried about the mechanics. I'm more interested in trying to get her to appreciate good literature.

The relevance of adult role modeling. Table 2 shows that for both questions, no low-literacy parent made any response that could be categorized as an adult event. (As Table 1 shows [see items 37 through 46], adult events were literacy-related activities that adults might do by themselves or for themselves).

By contrast, high-literacy caretakers were more vocal about their own roles as potential literacy models. For Question 1, five of the 11 caretakers spontaneously mentioned the importance of having an older person demonstrate the value of literacy. Table 2 shows that about 6% of their (Level 1) responses to Question 1 were adult-focused. Similarly, when specifically asked to comment on their role as parents in their child's literacy development (Question 2), five high-literacy caretakers mentioned the importance of children seeing an adult reading for his or her own purposes. Table 2 shows that almost 19% of their (Level 1) responses to Question 2 were adult-focused.

Typical high-literacy caretakers' comments were:

(Response to Question 1)

. . . whether they have role modeling parents who enjoy reading . . .

. . . the parents' role modeling with reading and setting an example for the child really helps.

(Responses to Question 2)

They can certainly hear a mother say 'Just a minute. I'm reading this, and I want to finish it. It's really good. O.K. Now what were you trying to say?'

I would guess probably that reading to the child helps a fair amount and then also just having the child see the parents reading would help, that is, seeing the parent read for their own purposes.

Capsule: How did caretakers answer the two open-ended questions. We offer the following summary of how low- and high-literacy parents answered each of the two open-ended questions. Regarding why some children do well in school and others don't, low-literacy parents almost exclusively attributed reasons for success or failure to the children themselves, i.e., to what they do, with or without an adult's presence and to what they are like innately.

High-literacy parents also mainly thought reasons for school success or failure rested with the children themselves. However, in contrast to low-literacy caretakers, they talked more about parents' roles in their children's success, through providing literacy artifacts and through adult events that modeled literacy.

Regarding what parents can do to help preschool youngsters, low-literacy caretakers focused on things children could do (such as try to tell or write

stories), things the caretakers could do with the child (such as write words or letters for the child), and the skills the child could acquire (such as being able to recite the alphabet). They never mentioned anything parents might do as role models.

High-literacy parents also placed most emphasis on what the children could do, but unlike low-literacy parents, the high-literacy parents saw adults as role models for their preschoolers' literacy development.

## Conclusions and Discussion

The conclusions of the study may be characterized first as general parental perceptions of preschoolers' literacy development, on the whole, and second as differences in perceptions of parents with lower versus higher literacy levels.

### Parental Perceptions, In General

On the whole, parents were very positive about the notion that literacy learning can begin during the preschool years:

(a) Literacy artifacts and events during the preschool years were viewed as important.

(b) What is done with artifacts was seen as more important than simply having the artifacts themselves. In fact, when asked to talk openly about literacy development in the early years, the notion of simply having literacy artifacts in the environment was rarely mentioned.

(c) Regarding artifacts, simple literacy materials, such as books, pencils, and paper, were seen as the most important kinds of materials to have in the home for nurturing literacy.

(d) Regarding events, natural interaction with books was viewed to be the most important kind. Parents perceived the most central

features of early literacy development to be (a) literacy events that involved the child, and (b) the child's own aptitude or disposition towards literacy learning . Further, the child's participation in an event was seen as more important than seeing adults doing a literacy activity.

(e) Early literacy development was characterized more as learning about reading than writing.

Low- Versus High-literacy Parental Perceptions

There was a significant relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of the importance of literacy artifacts and events.

(a) Though parents with lower and higher literacy levels tended to perceive literacy artifacts and events in preschoolers' homes to be important, ones with lower literacy levels thought they were *more* important than did parents with higher literacy levels.

(b) Low-literacy parents tended to value artifacts and events that might be considered "natural" or nurturing (such as paper, pens, magazines, reading to the child) *as well as* artifacts and events that might be considered "instructional" or "skill-oriented" (such as alphabet blocks, flashcards, watching educational television, and playing school). High-literacy parents, on the other hand, embraced "natural" artifacts and activities, but were outspoken in their disavowel of "skill-oriented" materials and activities.

(c) Though low-literacy parents felt adult role modeling was "important," they felt it was less important than child-centered activities, and in their answers to the open-ended questions, they mentioned no adult role-modeling events. On the other hand, high-literacy parents tended to perceive adult-centered or role

modeling activities and child-centered activities as roughly equivalent in importance.

(d) When asked to talk about their opinions, low-literacy parents had fewer ideas than high-literacy parents about why some children do well in school and others don't and about what parents can do to help their preschoolers.

Discussion

The findings of this study are important for several reasons. First, describing parental perceptions in general is in itself an advancement. And the description that emerged from the data is heartening. Documentation that parents feel literacy does, or at least can, develop during the preschool years is consonant with literacy specialists' contemporary views of "emergent literacy." Furthermore, the parents' perception that literacy can be encouraged without the presence of expensive toys and other materials would seem to make the encouragement of early literacy development more accessible to all socioeconomic groups. Also, their "child-centered" view combined with the position that "what you do with available literacy artifacts is more important than just having things" hints at an interactive environment, a condition which is highly conducive to literacy development.

There was one aspect of parental views, however, that differed somewhat from views of contemporary literacy specialists. That is, they tended to characterize early literacy development mainly with regard to reading, sometimes to the exclusion of writing. This suggests that, in some homes, reading and writing activities might not be interrelated and writing may not be encouraged. However, because of the parents' otherwise positive and open views about early literacy development, it appears possible that informational campaigns might raise their level of awareness regarding the possibilities for

early writing development and of the natural interrelationships between reading and writing.

Second, several comments may be made about the significant relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of early literacy development. The finding that parents with lower literacy levels tend to value the importance of early literacy artifacts and events *even more* than parents with higher literacy levels is encouraging. Perception of the importance of early development is a crucial first step towards provision of a nurturing home environment.

In some ways it is not surprising to find that people who have lower levels of literacy think literacy development is especially important. They are the ones who more likely have actually experienced some of the societal difficulties typically associated with low literacy levels--difficulties with securing employment, job advancement, on-the-job reading and writing requirements, reading and writing letters to friends and relatives, reading for pleasure and for "release" from everyday tensions, etc.

The differences in low- versus high-literacy parents' opinions about "natural" versus "skill-oriented" settings for early literacy development hint at different theoretical positions of what literacy is. To borrow Resnick's (1989) term, the low-literacy parents were much more likely than the high-literacy parents to view literacy as a "bundle of skills." In such a view, reading and writing are processes that primarily involve symbol manipulation, and the manipulations occur through the use of rule sets. The low-literacy parents' view is reminiscent of Resnick's (1987) delineation of "school learning" as focusing on *individual* cognition, "pure mentation" ("what individuals can do without the external support of books and notes . . ." [p. 13]), symbol manipulation in decontextualized situations, and a generalized

focus on "widely usable skills and theoretical principles" (p. 13). Low-literacy parents' perceptions of early literacy development, then, tended to reveal a view of learning to read and write as a "school game" (Resnick's phrase, 1987, p. 15).

The high-literacy parents, on the other hand, more clearly saw literacy as what Resnick (1987) describes as "cultural practice." In such a view, reading and writing are primarily socio-cultural processes which involve cognitive, symbolic manipulations, but which are done predominantly within a cultural context for particular purposes. This view is reminiscent of aspects of Resnick's (1987) delineation of "out-of-school learning," that is, it involves "shared cognition" (where an individual's ability to function "depends on what others do and how several individuals' mental and physical performances mesh" [p. 13]) and contextualized reasoning. High-literacy parents' perceptions of early literacy development, then, tended to reflect a view of learning to read and write as an "apprenticeship" (term from Resnick, 1987, 1989) situation; children learn about literacy and how to be literate through being immersed in a "culture of reason, analysis, and reflection, based on certain shared knowledge" (Resnick, 1987, p. 19, but with the context changed).

Next, the finding that low-literacy parents were less clear than high-literacy parents about the importance of their own role modeling for their children's literacy development was interesting. Prior research has clearly documented the importance of having adults serve as literacy role models. For example, parental literacy modeling has been associated with children who tend to show high interest in learning to read (Morrow, 1983), who begin reading earlier than their peers (Manning & Manning, 1984), and who are successful first grade readers (Kastler, Roser, & Hoffman, 1987).

Low-literacy parents' positive responses to the Likert items suggested that they understand the importance of adult role modeling. However, their failure to mention any adult modeling events in their open-ended responses hints that they may not know *how* to be role models or that they may feel they can't *be* role models. That is, they may have felt that their own inability to read well inhibits them from being role models. We might argue that the low-literacy parents in this study could *read*, albeit at low to moderately low levels, and that they still could be models simply by choosing their own reading material carefully. However, for many, reading may be such an arduous task that materials ordinarily available in homes (the newspaper, magazines) might just be too difficult for the parents to attempt. And they may either not know where to find materials on their level, or the chore of seeking them out may be burdensome.

It wasn't surprising to find that low-literacy parents had fewer ideas than high-literacy parents about why some children do well in school and others don't and about what parents can do to help their preschoolers. Individuals who don't read and write much or who don't read and write at particularly high levels are not likely to have large repertoires of ways literacy can be nourished. Also, it's well known that academic achievement is highly positively related to self-concept (Cohn & Kornelly, 1970; Schubert, 1978). Perhaps the low-literacy parents tended to attribute their own literacy difficulties primarily to personal characteristics, and concomitantly, generalized this attribution when asked why some children do well in school and others don't.

Third, the findings of this study have several implications for intergenerational and early childhood home literacy intervention programs: (a) Low-literacy parents are positive about *some* kind of intervention. They

do not appear to need to be persuaded about the importance of such intervention.

(b) If interventions are to be successful, program directors will need to consider the compatibility between their "theory of literacy" and that of the parents'. If the program itself is based on a "bundle of skills" view of literacy, perceptions of low-literacy parents are likely to be compatible, and intervention can consist of the actual techniques and methods for acquisition of the "skills." On the other hand, if the program itself is based on a "literacy as cultural practice" perspective, incompatibility with parental views is likely. In this case, special attention may need to be given to developing congruence in perspectives.

(c) Interventions will be likely to be more successful if the importance of parental role modeling is emphasized and if parents are shown how they can serve as role models even when they have very low levels of literacy themselves.

When considering the results of the present study, several limitations of the research should be held in mind. One is related to the use of the Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) as a measure of literacy level. Though it does yield a reliable ballpark estimate of reading achievement level, it reveals nothing about the extent to which individuals actually *are* readers. Further, we had no index of the parents' writing levels.

It would have been helpful to know the socioeconomic levels of the parents in the study. It is likely that literacy level and socioeconomic level are highly positively correlated, but we can not be sure of this in our study. Knowing their socioeconomic levels would have helped us to better place the results of the study in the context of prior work on emergent literacy in various socioeconomic sites.

It would have been informative to have more ethnic diversity at the extreme literacy levels, that is, to have more ethnic groups with low-literacy levels and more with high literacy-levels. Though prior research has indicated that ethnicity is not highly related to early home literacy practices (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Shieffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Teale, 1986), having greater representation at the various literacy levels might have further informed us about differences in perceptions due to ethnicity.

Finally, several intriguing research issues arise out of the present findings. For example, why do low-literacy parents seem to have a "bundle of skills" view of literacy, and why do high-literacy parents tend to see literacy as "cultural transmission"? What kinds of intergenerational or early childhood interventions would be most effective with parents with low-literacy levels? How are parental perceptions of emergent literacy related to what the parents actually do with their preschoolers in their homes?

## References

Anderson, A. B., & Stokes, S. J. (1984). Social and institutional influences on the development and practice of literacy. In H. Goelman, A. Oberg, & F. Smith (Eds.), Awakening to literacy (pp. 24-37). Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Briggs, C., & Elkind, D. (1977). Characteristics of early readers. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 44, 1231-1237.

Burns, J., & Collins, M. (1987). Parents' perceptions of factors affecting the reading development of intellectually superior accelerated readers and intellectually superior nonreaders. Reading Research and Instruction, 26, 239-246.

Cohn, M., & Kornelly, D. (1970). For better reading--A more positive self-image. Elementary School Journal, 70, 199-201.

Durkin, D. (1978). Teaching young children to read (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ferreiro, E., & Teberosky, A. (1982). Literacy before schooling. (K. G. Castro, Trans.). Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Goodman, Y. M. (1986). Children coming to know literacy. In W. H. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), Emerging literacy: Writing and reading (pp. 1-14). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Hall, N. (1987). The emergence of literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Heath, S. B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. Language and Society, 11, 49-76.

Heath, S. B. (1983). Ways with words. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jastak, J. F., & Jastak, S. R. (1978). The wide range achievement test. Wilmington, DE: Guidance Associates.

Kastler, L. A., Roser, N. L., & Hoffman, J. V. (1987). Understandings of the forms and functions of written language: Insights from children and parents. In J. Readence & R. S. Baldwin (Eds.), Research in literacy: Merging perspectives. Thirty-sixth yearbook of the National Reading Conference (pp. 85-92). Rochester, NY: National Reading Conference.

Manning, M., & Manning, G. (1984). Early readers and nonreaders from low socioeconomic environments: What their parents report. The Reading Teacher, 38, 32-34.

Mason, G. & Blanton, W. (1971). Story content for beginning reading instruction. Elementary English, 48, 793-796).

Moon, C. & Wells, G. (1979). The influence of the home on learning to read. Journal of Research in Reading, 2, 53-62.

Morrow, L. M. (1983). Home and school correlates of early interest in literature. Journal of Educational Research, 76, 221-230.

Resnick, L. (1987). Learning in school and out. Educational Researcher, 16, 13-20.

Resnick, L. (1989). Learning in school and out. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX.

Schieffelin, B. B., & Cochran-Smith, M. (1984). Learning to read culturally: Literacy before schooling. In H. Goelman, A. Oberg, & F. Smith (Eds.), Awakening to literacy (pp.3-23). Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Schubert, D. G. (1978). Reading improvement through self-concept development. Reading Improvement, 15, 157-160.

Share, D. L., Jorm, A. G., Maclean, R., Matthews, R., & Waterman, B. (1983). Early reading achievement, oral language ability, and a child's home background. Australian Psychologist, 18, 75-87.

Teale, W. H. (1987). Emergent literacy: Reading and writing development in early childhood. In J. Readence & R.S. Baldwin (Eds.), Research in literacy: Merging perspectives. Thirty-sixth yearbook of the National Reading Conference (pp. 45-74). Rochester, NY: National Reading Conference.

Teale, W. H. (1986). Home background and young children's literacy development. In W.H. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), Emergent literacy: Writing and reading (pp. 173-206). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Wells, G. (1986). The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn. Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Table 1

Mean Importance Ratings on Questionnaire Items

| Item | M (SD) |
|---|---|
| **Literacy Artifacts** | |
| 1. alphabet letter blocks or magnetic letters at home | 3.01 ( .89)[a] |
| 2. flashcards with letters or pictures and words in the home | 2.43 (1.11) |
| 4. paper to write on | 3.69 ( .46) |
| 5. pens, pencils, markers | 3.74 ( .44) |
| 7. chalkboard or other kind of board children can write on | 3.02 ( .77) |
| 8. computer-type toys that have children read or spell | 2.26 (1.04) |
| 10. children's books and magazines | 3.75 ( .48) |
| 11. preschool workbooks | 2.66 (1.06)[a] |
| 12. comic books | 1.84 ( .87)[a] |
| 13. books with records or cassettes that go with them | 2.85 ( .84) |
| 14. children's encyclopedia or dictionary | 2.55 ( .96) |
| 16. daily newspaper, or books or magazines for grown-ups | 2.96 (1.02)[a] |
| **Literacy Events/Interactions** | |
| Child Focused Events | |
| 17. children visit the public library | 3.52 ( .72) |
| 18. children hear stories on records, cassettes, or videos at home | 3.25 ( .76) |
| 19. children pretend to read story books | 3.36 ( .73) |
| 21. children watch "Sesame Street," "Reading Rainbow," or other similar TV shows at home | 3.10 ( .85) |
| 22. children talk about written letters and words | 3.46 ( .66) |
| 23. children try to tell or write stories | 3.54 ( .60) |
| 24. read or look at children's magazines or books by themselves | 3.61 ( .68) |
| 25. children talk about stories read to them | 3.72 ( .49)[a] |
| 26. children help to write letters and/or cards | 3.36 ( .77) |
| 27. children receive letters or cards, or open mail | 3.17 ( .77) |
| 28. have an older person write words or alphabet letters for the child | 3.44 ( .69) |
| 30. children "play school" with reading and writing activities | 3.02 ( .86) |
| 31. there's an older person at home who teaches children about reading and writing skills | 3.30 ( .90) |
| 32. children listen to stories read to them at home | 3.83 ( .37) |
| 33. children recite the alphabet | 3.07 ( .97) |
| 34. children say sounds for alphabet letters | 3.28 ( .87) |
| 36. children recognize store signs or traffic signs | 3.12 ( .90) |
| Adult Focused Events | |
| 37. adults reading books, magazines, newspapers at home | 3.78 ( .46) |
| 38. adults using a TV guide | 2.06 ( .96) |
| 39. adults using written recipes | 2.83 ( .80)[a] |
| 41. adults following written directions, such as on a box to put something together | 3.44 ( .60) |
| 42. adults receiving or writing letters | 3.35 ( .69) |
| 43. making shopping lists | 3.02 ( .71) |
| 44. leaving notes for family members | 3.26 ( .61) |
| 46. adults having their own library cards | 3.32 ( .70) |
| **Distractors** | |
| 3. balloons at home | 1.23 ( .52) |
| 6. bubble-blowing sets | 1.49 ( .74) |
| 9. stuffed animals | 1.90 ( .98) |
| 15. musical instruments in the home | 2.24 ( .94)[a] |
| 20. children play in a sandbox | 1.91 ( .96) |
| 29. children have races | 1.70 ( .89) |
| 35. children learn to color within the lines | 2.30 (1.09) |
| 40. adults doing the laundry | 1.75 ( .87) |
| 45. adults raking leaves | 1.40 ( .71) |

NOTE: N=108 subjects
[a] 107 subjects

Table 2

Percentages of Responses by Category and Group

| Category | Question 1 | | Question 2 | | Question 1 and 2 Combine | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low Literacy[a] | High Literacy[b] | Low Literacy | High Literacy | Low Literacy | High Literac |
| Literacy Artifacts | 0.00 | 5.78 | 9.38 | 13.79 | 5.27 | 9.93 |
| Unstructured Reading | 0.00 | 1.92 | 3.13 | 3.45 | 1.76 | 2.71 |
| Unstructured Writing | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 6.90 | 0.00 | 3.58 |
| Skill-Related Artifacts | 0.00 | 3.85[c] | 6.25 | 3.45[c] | 3.51 | 3.64 |
| Child-Focused Events | 39.99 | 38.46 | 65.60 | 55.17 | 54.36 | 47.12 |
| Primarily Reading | 4.00 | 7.69 | 31.25 | 23.21 | 19.30 | 15.74 |
| Primarily Writing | 8.00 | 3.85 | 3.12 | 7.14 | 5.26 | 5.56 |
| Skill-related | 4.00 | 7.69[d] | 12.50 | 7.14[d] | 8.77 | 7.40 |
| TV or other source of stimulation | 4.00 | 3.85 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.75 | 1.85 |
| Oral Language Activities | 0.00 | 1.92 | 3.12 | 8.93 | 1.75 | 5.55 |
| Other | 20.00 | 13.46 | 15.62 | 8.93 | 17.54 | 11.10 |
| Adult-focused Events | 0.00 | 5.78 | 0.00 | 18.96 | 0.00 | 12.61 |
| Primarily Reading | 0.00 | 3.85 | 0.00 | 13.27 | 0.00 | 8.73 |
| Primarily Writing | 0.00 | 1.92 | 0.00 | 5.68 | 0.00 | 3.87 |
| Child Characteristics | 48.00 | 34.61 | 9.38 | 6.90 | 26.32 | 20.24 |
| Readiness Skills | 4.00 | 11.53 | 12.51 | 5.18 | 8.78 | 8.24 |
| Other | 8.01 | 3.84 | 3.13 | 0.00 | 5.27 | 1.85 |

[a] n=13
[b] n=11
[c] All mentions were negative.
[d] Across both questions, 75% of the mentions were negative

Table 1

Mean Importance Ratings (and Standard Deviations) on Questionnaire Items for Lowest and Highest Quintiles on Wide Range Achievement Test

| Category | Group | |
|---|---|---|
| | Low[a] | High[b] |
| Literacy Artifacts | 3.04 (.19) | 2.57 (.31) |
| Literacy Events/Interactions | 3.29 (.38) | 3.11 (.25) |
| Child-centered Events | 3.43 (.46) | 3.15 (.35) |
| Adult-centered Events | 2.99 (.43) | 3.04 (.29) |

[a] n=14
[b] n=13

Table 4

Mean Importance Ratings on Highest and Lowest Ranked Questionnaire Items for Lowest and Highest Quintiles on Wide Range Achievement Test

| Category | Group: Low | Group: High |
|---|---|---|
| **Literacy Artifacts** | | |
| | 1[a] alphabet blocks (3.57)<br>2. flashcards (3.50)<br>4,5,10. paper; pens, pencils; children's books and magazines (3.36) | 5. pens, pencils (3.85)<br>4. paper (3.77)<br>10. children's books and magazines (3.69) |
| | 14. children's encyclopedia (2.79)<br>16. newspaper, books for adults (2.36)<br>12. comic books (1.50) | 14,2 children's encyclopedia; flashcards (1.85)<br>12. comic books (1.67)<br>8. computer toys for reading or spelling (1.46) |
| **Child Events** | | |
| | 32. listen to stories read (3.79)<br>25. talk about stories read (3.71)<br>21,30. watch "Sesame Street;" play school (3.64) | 32. listen to stories read (3.92)<br>17. visit the library (3.77)<br>25. talk about stories read (3.75) |
| | 24,18,19 read books by themselves; hear stories on records; pretend to read (3.29)<br>26. help write letters (3.14)<br>27. receive letters (2.93) | 36. recognize signs (2.54)<br>21. watch "Sesame Street" (2.46)<br>30. play school (3.23) |
| **Adult Events** | | |
| | 37. read books (3.64)<br>41. follow written directions (3.36)<br>42, 44. receive or write letters; leave notes (3.07) | 37. read books (3.92)<br>41, 42. follow written directions; receive or write letters (3.46)<br>46. have library card (3.31) |
| | 46. have library card (2.93)<br>39. use written recipes (2.50)<br>38. use TV guide (2.36) | 43. make shopping lists (2.77)<br>39. use written recipes (2.67)<br>38. use TV guide (1.46) |

[a]Refers to item number on Table 1

Table 5

Items With More Than One Point Difference Between Ratings by Lowest and Highest Quintiles on the Wide Range Achievement Test

| Category | Means of Groups Low | High | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Artifacts** | | | |
| 2.[a] flashcards | 3.50 | 1.85 | 1.65 |
| 8. computer toys for reading and spelling | 3.14 | 1.46 | 1.68 |
| 11. preschool workbooks | 3.36 | 2.00 | 1.36 |
| 13. books with records | 3.21 | 2.15 | 1.06 |
| **Child Events** | | | |
| 21. watch "Sesame Street" | 3.64 | 2.46 | 1.18 |
| 30. play school | 3.64 | 2.23 | 1.41 |
| 36. recognize signs | 3.57 | 2.54 | 1.03 |
| **Adult Events** | | | |
| 38. use TV guide | 2.36 | 1.46 | 1.14 |

[a]Refers to item number on Table 1

Figure 1

Categories Used for Analyses of Open-ended Responses

LITERACY ARTIFACTS

Unstructured Reading Artifacts

Items[a] 10, 12-14, 16
Wall hangings with letters on them

Unstructured Writing Artifacts

Items 4, 5, 7
Coloring and drawing materials

Skill-related Artifacts

Items 1, 2, 9, 11

CHILD-FOCUSED EVENTS

Primarily Reading

Items 17-19, 24, 27, 32, 36

Primarily Writing

Items 23, 26, 28
Children writing notes to/for parents
Children practicing writing

Skill-related

Items 30, 31, 33, 34
Children being pushed or challenged
Children engaging in free play (scored as a -1, as an indicator vs. skill-related child events)

TV or Other Source of Stimulation

Item 21
Children watching television

Oral Language Activities

Items 22, 25
Children listen to stories told
Children talked to by adults

Other

Older person demonstrating the value of literacy
Parents spending time with the child
Children attend preschool

ADULT-FOCUSED EVENTS

Primarily Reading

Items 37-39, 41, 46

Primarily Writing

Items 42-44
Adults writing

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

Intelligence/Cognitive ability/Absence of learning disability
Interest
Confidence
Physical abilities or state
Attention
Fine motor skills
Gender
Emotional state
Heredity

READINESS SKILLS

Being aware of the functions of literacy
Numeral names
Letter names
Letter sounds
Sight words
Word meanings/Concepts
Colors
Directionality of print
General developmental readiness

---

[a] Refer to Item Numbers of Table 1



BEST COPY AVAILABLE